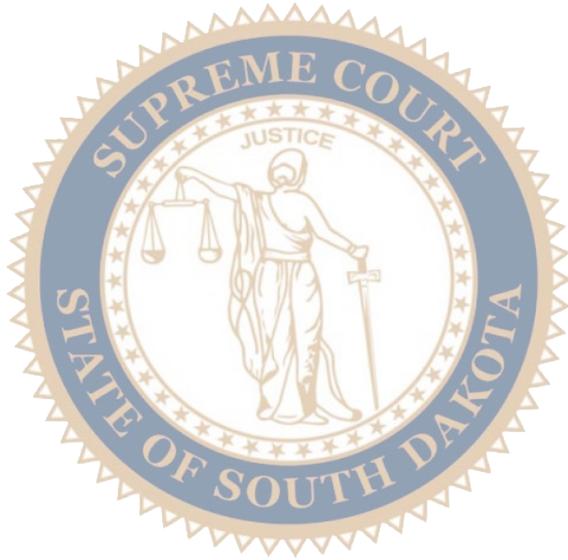


SOUTH DAKOTA UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM



2025

STATE of the JUDICIARY



JUSTICE FOR ALL



South Dakota Supreme Court

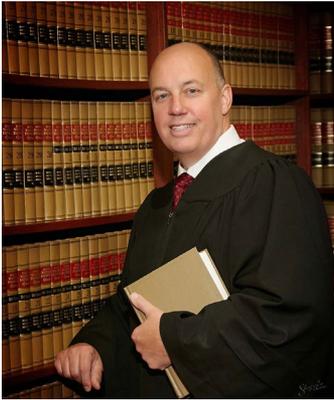
- Justice Patricia J. DeVaney, Third District
- Justice Janine M. Kern, First District
- Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen, Fourth District
- Justice Mark E. Salter, Second District
- Justice Scott P. Myren, Fifth District

2025 STATE OF THE JUDICIARY

South Dakota Courts



Introduction



**Chief Justice
Steven R. Jensen**

Governor Noem, Lieutenant Governor Rhoden, members of the Legislature, Constitutional Officers, my fellow Justices, Judges, Unified Judicial System (UJS) employees, and all South Dakotans: I am honored to deliver my 2025 State of the Judiciary message to you.

I count it a privilege to have this opportunity each year to discuss the work of the courts in South Dakota. The importance of the courts in maintaining peace and tranquility in our communities can often be taken for granted until we step back and take a brief look at history.

A few months back, I was provided an excerpt of a book written in 1947 by former Aberdeen School Superintendent Charles Dalthorp, one of the founders of the South Dakota Boy's State program. In a section on the South Dakota judicial branch, Dalthorp describes how communities handled disputes and punished crime before the courts were in existence in South Dakota. He states:

"In the days of early settlement in South Dakota no courts were available. If a person was accused of committing a crime, he was taken before a citizens' group, and both sides of the questions were heard before one of the group who was elected 'judge.' After the evidence was completed, a decision was made

on the case without reference to law or logic. At times when the crime was a serious one like murder, rape, or horse stealing, the citizens did not go through the formality of a hearing. They merely shot the accused or hanged him from the nearest tree. Clear-thinking and law-abiding early citizens realized that if the state was to grow and prosper and attract high types of citizens, a good system of the court must be established.”

The citizens of the territory that would later become South Dakota may have been well meaning in their zeal to maintain order and seek justice, but a society based on mob rule will have a short and turbulent existence.



Photo: South Dakota State Historical Society

We can be grateful that the founding fathers of both the United States and South Dakota recognized the necessity of due process of law and the importance of an independent judiciary designed to resolve disputes fairly, peacefully, and sensibly.

For more than 135 years, the courts in this state have peacefully resolved factual and legal disputes that litigants have been unable to work out on their own. In county courthouses across South Dakota, the courts provide a fair and impartial forum for these disputes, where the rule of law is applied equally and consistently to all persons. This only happens through an independent judiciary that is not swayed by politics, power, or public opinion, but rests each decision on established principles of law governing our decisions.

When I was a circuit judge, many mornings I would walk into the courthouse and think about the awesome responsibility and trust placed in me as a judge to decide the cases that would come before me that day. I still feel that way as Chief Justice. Some of the cases can be resolved quickly, while others require a great deal of time, effort, and study. Regardless of the complexity of the case, every decision is weighty because it's always important to that person appearing before the court, and the result often has a significant impact on their life.

The Importance of Public Trust

The courts are not merely institutions of law; they are the bedrock of justice. They fairly resolve disputes between parties, determine guilt or innocence and mete out the appropriate sentence, safeguard our rights, uphold our freedoms, and protect citizens from governmental overreach. For these essential functions to be effective, however, they must be trusted. Trust is the foundation upon which the legitimacy of our judiciary rests.

A person seeking redress in the courts needs to have confidence that the system will work for them. When a case is finished, a litigant should believe that they received “a fair shake,” regardless of the outcome. The public must also have confidence in the decisions and work of the court. When the public trusts the court system, they respect its legitimacy and authority, cooperate with the legal process, and participate in civic duties like jury service.

Having worked in the legal system for my entire career, I have a deep and abiding belief in the integrity of our court system in this state. The judges and court staff are not perfect—no human is—but they work hard to provide fairness, efficiency, and competence in resolving the tens of thousands of cases that come before them each year. They are unsung heroes who understand their role in serving the public and providing access for everyone seeking redress in the courts. Nonetheless, we cannot take public trust and confidence in the courts for granted. Each of us working in the courts must daily recognize the need to earn and safeguard the public trust in the work that we do.

This can be difficult in our current age where trust in most institutions is near historic lows. The rapid spread of misinformation, the divisive nature of public discourse, and the perception of bias and partisanship in our society all have the potential to erode confidence in the judicial system. The good news, however, is that according to a recent national survey conducted by the National Center for State Courts, nearly two-thirds of Americans express trust and confidence in the state courts. Perhaps even more encouraging is that the percentage of respondents expressing trust in the state courts has increased slightly in each of the past two years.

I believe part of the reason for this encouraging trend is the close connection that exists between citizens and their local state courts. People actually see the work of the state courts and understand

firsthand how the work of the courts positively impacts families, communities, and public safety.

To ensure that we continue to do this work well in the South Dakota courts, the UJS this past year began a strategic plan initiative designed to develop priorities for carrying out the core function of the courts—that is deciding cases fairly, efficiently, and competently under the law. The strategic plan is focused on access to justice issues, effective court operations and systems, our workforce, technology, security, and public trust and confidence in the courts. I want to speak to a few of these priorities this morning.

Access to the Courts

Access to the courts has been a major focus for us the past few years and will continue to be a main goal moving forward. We must, as a court system, do our best to ensure that every person in every case has an opportunity to be heard; this is the essence of due process of law. The early American statesman, Daniel Webster, defined due process as “a law which hears before it condemns, which proceeds on inquiry, and renders judgment only after trial.” The constitutional right to due process exists whether an individual has been charged with a crime or is seeking resolution of a civil dispute in the courts. Access issues may look different in criminal and civil cases, but our obligation remains the same—to provide due process and fairness to every person involved in the court system.



Indigent Criminal Defense

One effort to ensure due process of law in criminal cases has been centered on our indigent defense system in South Dakota. Indigent defense is the constitutional right of every person charged with a crime, who is unable to afford an attorney, to be appointed counsel at the expense of the state.

The Sixth Amendment right to counsel for those unable to afford an attorney in criminal cases is important to all South Dakotans and furthers public trust and confidence in the courts. Maintaining a strong system of indigent defense is what makes us different from other countries where the rule of law is not respected or upheld. The commitment to an effective indigent defense system not only ensures adequate representation for the accused, but it also makes certain that our standards for due process are truly maintained.

We are grateful that the Legislature, this past session, enacted legislation offered by the UJS to create a Commission on Indigent Legal Services to oversee the delivery of legal services for those unable to afford counsel in criminal cases. The Commission is an independent body responsible for coordinating and managing the indigent defense system across the state, developing standards for assigning and handling court-appointed criminal cases, and providing training and assistance to lawyers handling criminal appointments. It's a volunteer board of experienced legal and governmental professionals appointed by the Governor, Chief Justice, Legislature, and the counties. The Legislature also provided \$1.4 million in ongoing funding to create the Office of Indigent Legal Services.

The Commission and the Office of Indigent Legal Services will be instrumental in taking an ad hoc system that has been county funded and managed and turning it into one that provides management of the indigent defense system statewide. The creation of the Commission and the Office of Indigent Legal Services is a monumental first step to create a more effective and efficient system of indigent defense in South Dakota.

I am pleased to report that the Commission's work is already underway. The members have selected USD Knudson School of Law Dean Neil Fulton to serve as chair. They have been meeting regularly since May to tackle the process and standards for statewide indigent defense.



Chris Miles, an experienced public defender and appellate lawyer, was hired by the Commission as the chief defender to run the Office of Indigent Legal Services. This office will initially be responsible for providing court-appointed legal services in appeals of cases involving crimes, habeas corpus, and abuse and neglect of children. The Office of Indigent Legal Services is designed to function much like the Attorney General's appellate division, which handles criminal appeals for the state.

We project that the efficiencies and expertise developed within the Office of Indigent Legal Services will save \$600,000 annually, as compared to our prior system. With these savings and the state-funded office, we expect counties will cumulatively realize more than \$2.1 million in savings annually. The Legislature also authorized a one-time \$3 million appropriation last year to help counties defray the cost of indigent defense. The Commission on Indigent Legal Services distributed these funds this past fall, on a pro rata basis, to every county in the state.

The next and final step of moving from an ad hoc county funded and managed indigent defense system to a statewide system will involve implementation at the trial court level. Judges and counties continue

to struggle, especially in rural areas, with finding attorneys to defend criminal cases. This is especially true in the most serious felony cases. These cases require experienced trial counsel to effectively represent the accused. Currently, many of these serious felony cases are handled by private counsel who may spend months defending these cases, with limited resources and support. Additionally, in rural counties where there are few attorneys, it may be necessary for a private attorney to drive several hours to the courthouse or jail, and attorneys do not receive compensation for their travel time. The creation of regional, full-time public defenders through the Office of Indigent Legal Services could alleviate many of these concerns both in high stakes cases and many other cases.

The expansion of the Office of Indigent Legal Services to the trial court level will require statutory authorization. Funding of the regional public defender positions will also need to be worked out between the state and counties as we move forward. But we now have the framework in place to expand these criminal legal services to the trial courts throughout South Dakota.

It is important for everyone to note that these changes will not involve any new governmental services; indigent defense is already being funded by South Dakota taxpayers. Rather, the changes are designed to replace an antiquated and inefficient indigent defense system managed and paid exclusively by counties with a robust and effective statewide system. Moreover, the changes will ensure that South Dakota continues to meet its constitutional obligation to provide effective representation to the accused.

This past year, the UJS asked the Sixth Amendment Center to assist in implementing a statewide indigent defense system by conducting an extensive review of trial-level indigent defense provided in seven counties across South Dakota. Following the study, the Sixth Amendment Center released its report, making several recommendations and emphasizing the need for uniform standards for indigent legal services across the state. Significantly, the Sixth Amendment Center's report referenced a South Dakota study conducted by another group in 1977, which made nearly the exact same recommendations to ensure the constitutional right to counsel in South Dakota. I am grateful to the Legislature and Governor Noem for working with the judicial branch to accomplish the first step in a task that is truly 50 years in the making.

Civil Access to the Courts

Access to the courts in civil cases is another priority for the UJS. Recent studies have suggested that 80% of civil cases filed in state courts in this country involve at least one self-represented party. We are seeing similar trends in South Dakota. The uptick in the number of unrepresented litigants in civil cases is a product of both the cost of legal services and the absence of lawyers available to handle civil cases, a trend both in South Dakota and nationwide.

The number of self-represented litigants presents challenges for the unrepresented individuals and for the entire court system. Self-represented litigants face difficulties understanding legal jargon, the rules of procedure, and the substantive law which may impact their case. Court staff cannot provide legal advice but are often asked questions about the documents that need to be filed and the process for making a claim or asserting a defense. The additional time required of court staff to review documents and answer questions places more demands on employees already managing full caseloads.



Furthermore, judges hearing cases with self-represented litigants are placed in the difficult position of maintaining their neutrality while ensuring these individuals are heard and able to present their case. Self-represented individuals may inadvertently slow down proceedings, as well, due to their unfamiliarity with court procedures and create more court congestion as judges work through busy dockets.

Legal aid organizations in South Dakota such as East River Legal Services, Dakota Plains Legal Services, and Access to Justice offer free or reduced-fee legal help for low-income eligible persons. Unfortunately, the demand for legal services in civil cases far exceeds their resources. These organizations receive, on average, 350 applications for assistance a month. Additionally, many individuals do not meet the income guidelines to qualify, leaving a gap for people who cannot afford counsel but are not eligible for legal aid.

To better address these challenges, the South Dakota Supreme Court adopted a rule on February 20, 2024, to create a Commission on Access to the Courts. The Commission is comprised of 11 members, representing the courts, State Bar, USD Knudson School of Law, and legal aid organizations. The Commission's work will include recommending improvements in court processes, developing legal forms and documents, improving resources for legal aid, creating models to assist self-represented litigants, utilizing technology, and recommending rule changes to improve the availability of legal services throughout the state.

The work of the Commission is still in its infancy, but I am excited about its prospects. I greatly appreciate the work of Commission Chair Judge Jon Sogn from Sioux Falls, and the entire Commission as they work to improve access to justice in civil cases and enhance public trust and confidence in the courts.

Probation and Pretrial Services

Probation services is another focus of our strategic plan. In South Dakota, a court may impose probation, with conditions, as part of a suspended county jail or prison sentence. Within the UJS, probation services are managed by court services. Court services officers oversee both adult and juvenile probationers, ensuring compliance with court-ordered sentencing conditions and facilitating rehabilitation efforts.

It is important to distinguish probation from parole. While probation is a court-ordered sentence involving a period of supervision as part of a suspended incarceration, parole involves conditional release from prison and is administered by the South Dakota Department of Corrections, not the UJS.

During FY2024, UJS court services officers supervised 7,469 adults and 1,490 youth on probation. The dedicated efforts of our court services officers to provide supervision and connect individuals with the appropriate community resources and support in their path toward success are both demanding and deeply rewarding. Judges and court services officers alike can share countless stories of individuals who have transformed their lives to become productive members of society. This past fiscal year, a total of 1,780 adults and 1,038 juveniles were successfully discharged from probation.

Before I talk about some of our efforts to enhance probation, I want to share with you just a few examples of some of the impactful work being done by court services in our communities. Danica is the first individual I want to highlight whose life was dramatically changed while on probation.



Today, Danica is a Miss South Dakota SLICC ambassador.

Between the ages of 14 and 18, Danica struggled with alcohol addiction and drug abuse. She spent two and a half years on probation under the supervision of CSOs Tim Moon and Jennifer Gropper from Mitchell. During this time, Danica worked to overcome her addictions, as well as challenges relating to her family history, peers, and socio-economic barriers. While on probation, she focused on accountability, sobriety, personal growth, goal setting, addressing the causes of her addictions, and developing coping skills. Now as an adult, Danica is a strong leader, a devoted mother, and a good role model for her community. Danica was named Miss Mount Rushmore last May and is a Miss South Dakota SLICC ambassador, where her advocacy work is centered on sobriety.

Danica explained, “I go around to different treatment centers, and I speak, and I tell my story, and I share my experience, strength and hope. It’s not about where you’ve been. It’s about where you’re going.”

Corrine was arrested in July 2023 by South Dakota Highway Patrol Trooper Troy Archambeault for possession of a controlled substance. She was subsequently sentenced to a suspended sentence with probation and has been successfully supervised by Court Services Officer Nickol Penrod. On October 15, 2024, at the Hughes County Courthouse, Corrine paid tribute to Trooper Archambeault and CSO Penrod for saving and turning her life around. She presented both with a star quilt. Corrine told CSO Penrod early on in her probation that she felt like the trooper that arrested her saved her life. CSO Penrod reports that Corrine is doing “awesome.” She has earned three more credits toward her online degree through Sinte Gleska University and is seeking employment. Corrine’s relationships with her children and family have been restored and she will be discharged from probation soon.

Finally, I want to share the story of Chris, who was arrested at age 14 for truancy, second-degree burglary, breaking and entering, and alcohol consumption. As a high-risk, high-need juvenile, Chris spent ages 15 to 16 under the supervision of CSO Amie Weglin. With CSO Weglin’s support and the help of community services, Chris overcame substance abuse, family and social challenges, and anger issues while continuing to address childhood trauma. Today, at age 26, Chris has served in the U.S. Armed Forces and on active duty. He is pursuing a career as an electrician and aspires to become a business owner.



Highway Patrol Trooper Troy Archambeault, Corrine, Court Services Officer Nickol Penrod, and Corrine's mother at the Hughes County Courthouse on October 15, 2024.

CSO Weglin works closely with treatment facilities, juvenile services centers, and counselors to ensure juveniles are getting the services they need. Reflecting on her work, CSO Weglin said, “I feel juvenile delinquency and high-risk juveniles are often a product of their environment. I feel we can offer all the services we have to juveniles, but until the family unit and community is invested, long-term success is more difficult. We have many parents who are addicts; lack parenting skills; have mental health barriers, financial barriers, or legal issues themselves; and who would prefer the juvenile be removed from the home.”

These individual stories highlight just a few of the hundreds of individuals who successfully complete probation each year. Their stories also underscore the fact that many of these offenders are juveniles or young adults. In 2023, the UJS sponsored legislation to create an emerging adult task force to examine barriers to services for adults aged 18 to 25 involved in the justice system. The purpose

of the task force was to explore opportunities to improve services and reduce recidivism. In addition to specific training focused on rehabilitating young adults, the task force has also begun work on several pilot projects.

One pilot project is a program targeting the development of life skills training for individuals in this age group. Court services officers communicate more frequently with these participants and provide specific life skills training and mentoring. Another pilot project, called Journey do, was started in October and is targeted toward youth. Through this project, growth specialists meet online with youth and conduct an intake assessment. After the assessment has been completed, the youth are assigned different modules that focus on criminogenic needs. While these programs are in their early stages, we believe they have potential to keep youth in their communities and out of further involvement in the justice system.

There are more opportunities for enhancing probation services for juveniles and young adults, as we consider expanding mentoring and providing safe housing to support individuals working toward restoration. For these types of services to be successful, we will need to engage community volunteers, groups, and churches to walk alongside these young people. It is not easy work. If we really want to see individuals overcome addictions and other life controlling obstacles, however, it will take the active involvement of communities across South Dakota.

Another way to improve rehabilitation outcomes is through enhancing the services individuals receive before trial, not just afterward. Pretrial services assist people who are charged with crimes and awaiting a court date. CSOs can help gather and present information about newly-arrested individuals and available release options to be used to determine what, if any, conditions should be put in place prior to the person's pretrial release. Pretrial services can also provide supervision of individuals released from custody, monitor their compliance with release conditions, and connect them with rehabilitative services. These services are all aimed at keeping our communities safe, while ensuring individuals appear for their scheduled court appearances.

Some larger South Dakota counties, such as Minnehaha and Pennington, have introduced limited pretrial services programs to assist those in the pretrial stages of the criminal justice system. The services available through these programs include assistance with completing information for the judge, offering court reminders, overseeing pretrial check-ins, and other duties as needed to support this phase of the justice process. Both counties have received grants to help fund these programs through their respective sheriff's departments.

Pennington County recently secured an additional grant for a pilot project to further explore a pretrial supervision program provided by court services. The two main goals of the program are to ensure that individuals attend their court dates and that they do so without further contact with law enforcement. We are conducting four site visits to learn how court systems in other states have implemented pretrial supervision in their communities.

A statewide pretrial services program will not take the place of anything currently happening in our justice system. It is intended to be an additional tool available to the courts that does not currently exist. Judges make bond decisions every day, determining whether an individual is a flight risk and whether they can safely be released in the community prior to trial. Often judges place conditions upon individuals released on bond, but we have limited ability to ensure those conditions are being followed. Pretrial services will provide the necessary supervision for individuals released on bond and create opportunities for collaboration with counties and prosecutors to develop diversion programs, which most counties do not have the resources to provide at this time.

As we think about moving forward with this project, it is important to note that the South Dakota judicial system currently does not have statutory authority to monitor adults prior to conviction. Once our pilot project work is completed, we anticipate offering legislation to create this authority. We will continue to work with counties, states attorneys, public defenders, and community partners for their assistance and input as we work toward the potential implementation of a pretrial services program in South Dakota.

Treatment Courts

As a part of the UJS' work both in the courtroom and through probation services, South Dakota's treatment courts provide enhanced opportunities to address addiction or mental health issues. Individuals with mental health issues or who are struggling with addiction to alcohol or drugs commit crimes at significantly higher rates than the general population. Unfortunately, these issues are also some of the most difficult to rehabilitate.

South Dakota's 17 treatment courts, including drug court, DUI court, veterans court, and mental health court, play a vital role in addressing these issues. Treatment courts provide a long-term treatment program, with intensive supervision by the treatment court team, focused on addressing the root causes of criminal behavior. Treatment courts help participants reintegrate into society and have been shown to significantly reduce re-offense rates compared to traditional justice methods.

South Dakota's treatment courts have served a total of 2,684 participants since inception. Of these, 1,227 individuals successfully completed the program, achieving a graduation rate of 57%. We exceeded projections for admissions in FY2024 by serving 809 participants in the program—significantly more than the 698 anticipated and a 21% increase from the 669 clients served in FY2023.

The average length of a treatment court program is 491 days. The average age of treatment court participants is 35, and the most common addictions among participants are to alcohol (41%) and methamphetamine (40.9%).

The future looks much different for those who have successfully completed a treatment court program. These individuals experience increased stability, benefiting from access to housing resources, financial counseling, and improved employment opportunities driven by reduced substance abuse. They achieve better physical and mental health through consistent treatment, therapy, and health care services, resulting in fewer emergency room visits and reduced long-term health complications. Many participants pursue GEDs or



The accomplishments of participants completing the Sixth Circuit Treatment Court were celebrated in the State Capitol Rotunda last May during National Treatment Court Month.

vocational training, with a greater likelihood of completing higher education. Through counseling and behavioral changes, they repair and strengthen family relationships, often regaining custody of their children. Structured payment plans and financial management support enables participants to meet child support obligations more effectively. Additionally, sobriety and prenatal care programs reduce the likelihood of drug-affected births and improve maternal health outcomes.

The human condition and free choice create complexities that services alone will never fully resolve, but probation and treatment courts can and do play a significant role in helping individuals turn their lives around. Our role as a court system in helping to rehabilitate individuals is ultimately about providing the most effective services possible. We will continue to make this our mission every day.



The Jeff W. Davis Memorial Courtroom at the Pennington County Courthouse in Rapid City.

Courthouse and Judicial Security

Courthouse and judicial security also remain important priorities for the UJS. The necessity of this commitment is underscored by the 56 threats and incidents reported by UJS judges and employees over the past year.

Our effort to improve courthouse security across South Dakota has involved a three-pronged approach. The first prong is the creation of local courthouse security committees made up of court and county personnel, as well as law enforcement. We now have committees in 51 of the 63 counties where courthouses are located. The second prong involves conducting security assessments by Homeland Security and the U.S. Marshall's Service to identify potential security gaps at each courthouse in the state. To date, 56 site assessments of courthouse

locations have been completed. These assessments help to guide the third prong of our courthouse security initiative, which is the use of grant funding to assist counties to implement recommended security improvements at courthouses.

The grants are available as a result of the Legislature's one-time \$5 million appropriation three years ago, enabling the UJS to work with counties to improve courthouse security. The UJS administers the grant program, and the grants pay for 75% of the needed security upgrades at courthouses. Over the last two and a half years, this funding has significantly enhanced security at many courthouses. This past year, nearly \$900,000 in courthouse security improvements were approved for projects statewide. Improvements have included installing camera systems, duress alarms, security doors, and upgrading courthouse lighting and parking areas.

Two upcoming projects are a complete access control system for 63 doors and two elevators at the Pennington County Courthouse and the construction of a new security checkpoint in the entrance of the Brown County Courthouse. The UJS will continue to utilize data on security incidents and site assessments to determine security gaps and seek future funding from the Legislature as needed for ongoing security efforts and enhancements of our court facilities.

Unfortunately, judicial security must also extend outside the walls of the courthouse. Over the past several years, judges and their families across the country have been threatened, shot, or killed in or near their own homes. I recently had the opportunity to hear Texas District Court Judge Julie Kocurek tell her story of being shot multiple times in the driveway of her home as she and her son were returning home from a Friday night high school football game. The gunman targeted her solely because he was a defendant in a criminal case before Judge Kocurek. After months of rehabilitation, Judge Kocurek returned to her work and continues to serve today. Her story is a reminder of the risk judges face every day.

The UJS continues to work on enhancing personal judicial security through threat monitoring. We have also taken steps to safeguard judges' personal identifying information and made those services available to employees at a reduced cost.

Conclusion

The court system's work that I have described today could only be accomplished through the many dedicated judges and court employees of the UJS. Facilitating public trust and confidence in the courts always starts with our people. They are the face of justice for individuals entering the court system every day. It is our goal to create a culture where people entering the courts interact with staff who are knowledgeable, caring, and helpful. We strive for people to see judges who are hardworking, take the time to hear from all the parties, efficiently move cases forward, and are knowledgeable and committed to following the law. We are fortunate to have excellent judges and staff in our South Dakota courts, and I am proud to stand here today to talk about their good work.

Last week, I began my second four-year term as Chief Justice of the South Dakota Supreme Court. At the same time, I also had the pleasure of reappointing the seven presiding circuit judges in each of our circuits in South Dakota. These judges are Judge Cheryl Gering, Judge Robin Houwman, Judge Greg Stoltenburg, Judge Mike Day, Judge Gregg Magera, Judge Christina Klinger, and Judge Robert Gusinsky. They do the heavy lifting of managing staff within their circuits and ensuring that cases are resolved efficiently and effectively. They are dedicated public servants, and I appreciate their commitment to the work of the courts.

As I end today, I want to thank my colleagues—Justices Janine Kern, Mark Salter, Patty DeVaney, and Scott Myren—for their confidence in giving me another opportunity to serve in this capacity. I also appreciate their work in leading and setting the vision for the court system in South Dakota; it is truly a joint effort. The five Justices on the South Dakota Supreme Court bench, me included, all grew up in small towns in South Dakota. We often joke that Justice Salter grew up in a “metropolis”—Parker, a town of just over 1,000—as compared to the towns of Lake Andes, Mound City, Polo, and Wakonda. All five of us are South Dakotans at heart. As such, we are dedicated to leading a court system worthy of the faith and trust of every South Dakotan. I am grateful for your support in this mission. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steven R. Jensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" being more prominent and the last name "Jensen" following in a similar style.

Steven R. Jensen, Chief Justice

South Dakota Supreme Court and Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen's portrait taken by Sleger's Studio in Highmore.

200 copies of this booklet were printed at a cost of \$3.03 each.



SOUTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT

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